

# POCKET PC EXPERT

## FAQ

**Q** Is there a way of buying music on Apple's iTunes to play on a Pocket PC?

**A** Apple uses the proprietary Digital Rights Management (DRM) system so that songs purchased via iTunes can only be played back directly using Apple's own software, running on a PC or Macintosh, or an Apple iPod. The terms of service for iTunes currently state that: "You shall be entitled to export, burn (if applicable) or copy Products solely for personal, non-commercial use. You shall not be entitled to burn video Products." Unfortunately, although you can burn your own CDs from purchased iTunes, there's no sensible way to get them back into a format that your Pocket PC can use, such as MP3 or WMA.

The bottom line is that if you wish to buy music from iTunes, you're better off getting an iPod. If you wish to convert tracks from your own CD collection for use on your Pocket PC, you can do it easily using your PC's built-in Windows Media Player.

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# Enter text quickly

While your Pocket PC can cram a great deal into its tiny frame, its size can be a hindrance when you need to input lots of text. **Steve Clack** taps into some quick input methods

**I**f you spend quite a bit of time entering text into your handheld, it's worth exploring the best ways to do it. Every Pocket PC comes with four ways to enter text, and there are at least double that number of add-on programs, each with their own unique features and benefits.

Before choosing your preferred input method, it's important to examine how you use your handheld. Your PDA is designed to be a companion to your desktop, so if you spend most of your time sitting at a desk with your PC, try to enter information directly into that wherever possible, rather than on to the handheld. Whether you're entering addresses, appointments or tasks into Outlook or drafting a few notes in Word, it will be quicker using your full-sized desktop or notebook keyboard, and it will all synchronise straight back to your handheld via ActiveSync, so there's no reason not to use your PC when you're connected. A lot of third-party Pocket PC programs also have a PC desktop component that allows you to do your data entry on the desktop, including note-taking programs, databases and drawing applications.

## INPUT OPTIONS

If you're not at your desk, you can still enter large volumes of text at a respectable speed, provided you're using the right tool for the job. Of the four options built into Pocket PCs, you can forget about three of them. Block Recogniser and Letter Recogniser are of most use to those who learnt the old Graffiti input system on Palm OS handhelds, where you scribble out letter shapes into a little window at the bottom of the screen. They're both perfectly usable, and have the advantage of allowing you to enter data without looking at the screen, at least with a little practice. However, most of us will never manage more than around 15 words per minute using either. This is acceptable when you are entering addresses or short single sentences, but it won't do if you're writing a two-page report during a train or plane journey.

The built-in Transcriber option fares a little better – if you can write tidily enough for it to recognise your handwriting with a decent level of accuracy – but most people find they spend as much time backspacing and correcting errors as they do writing. CalliGrapher (\$40, around £22, from [www.phatware.com](http://www.phatware.com)) is a huge improvement on Transcriber, but there's still a limit

to how fast you can 'write' words, as opposed to tapping letters on a keyboard.

## KEYBOARD WIZARD

The onscreen Keyboard option works well. Most of us are familiar with its QWERTY layout and it's possible to achieve a high degree of accuracy, as each onscreen key is big enough to avoid errors. It also takes less time to tap a key than it does to scribble out a letter shape, so it's faster than the other three built-in options already mentioned. The only snag is that the keyboard spans the whole width of the screen, so you're slowed down by having to move across the screen to each successive key. If you're happy with Keyboard, it's worth getting to know a few short cuts to further speed up your input.

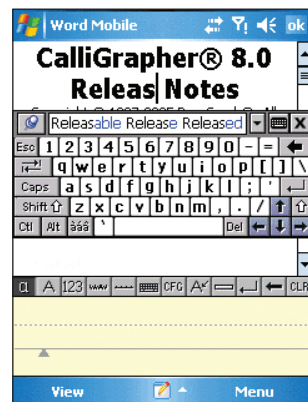
Tap on the little arrow to the right of the input method selector at the bottom right of your screen, or at the bottom centre of Windows Mobile 5.0 devices, and choose Options. From there, you can enable a right-drag on any letter to create a space, left-drag for backspace, down-drag for Enter and up-drag for Shift. Windows Mobile 5.0 will allow you to do this only when you select a 'large' keyboard layout that omits some of the less frequently used keys, but older devices let you do it with the standard keyboard as well.

Recognising that onscreen keyboard entry is the best route to fast input, CalliGrapher comes with its own keyboard, including a word-completion system rather like Microsoft Word's AutoCorrect, and the ability to 'float' the keyboard to any part of the screen. If you like the idea of using a keyboard for large volumes of text but prefer the more natural option of writing text onscreen for shorter bursts of input, CalliGrapher is worth a try.

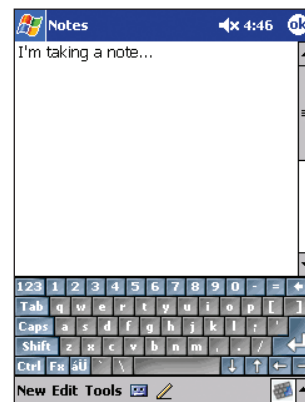
## GO AGAINST TYPE

If you prefer the familiar QWERTY layout but want a little more flexibility, Resco Keyboard Pro (\$20, around £11, from [www.resco.net](http://www.resco.net)) offers a skinnable interface, better support for symbols and foreign languages, plus a handy numeric keyboard for spreadsheet work, and a pop-up calculator that can cut and paste results directly between applications. You can also assign a limited number of short cut phrases to their own separate onscreen keypad.

If you're looking for the ultimate in speed, Fitaly (\$25, around £14, from [www.fitaly.com](http://www.fitaly.com)) makes it



◀ CalliGrapher has its own keyboard, which includes a word-completion system like Word's AutoCorrect

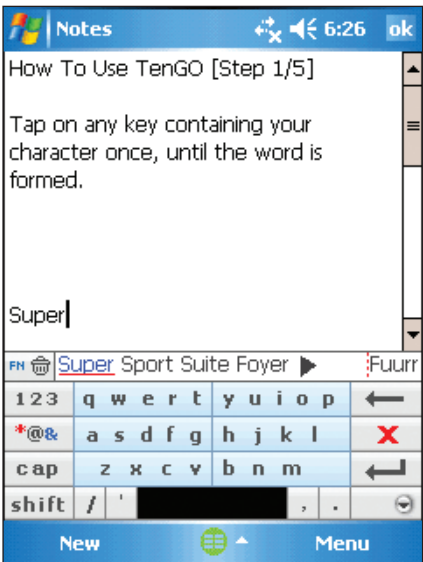


◀ Resco Keyboard Pro offers support for symbols and foreign languages, and also a useful numeric keyboard



▲ Fitaly enables you to input text much faster by rearranging the letters of the alphabet

possible to input 50 words per minute or more. It achieves this primarily by rearranging the letters of the alphabet to put them all closer together, particularly those that are most frequently used in the English language. The result is that hand movements are minimised, with less time therefore needed to move your stylus from one letter to the next.



▲ The TenGO keyboard is a fast variation on the QWERTY layout, using a predictive input system

This non-standard layout will take you a few weeks to master, but it's worth the effort. Fitaly, which is named after the layout of the letters along the second row of the keyboard, has superb support for entering special symbols and accented foreign characters, as well as a brilliant short cut system that allows you to input whole words and phrases just by dragging

in a particular direction after you've tapped on a letter.

TAP DANCING

The TenGO keyboard (\$25, around £14, from [www.tengo.net](http://www.tengo.net)) is a quirky but fast variation on the QWERTY layout. You don't have to tap accurately on each letter; the keyboard is divided into six blocks of letters, using a T9-style predictive input system to work out the word you're entering. By allowing you to keep all your taps near the centre of the screen, you can type faster. As with T9 input on a mobile phone, it sometimes offers more than one word to match what you've entered, and this slows things down a bit, but it's a good second choice if you don't want to take the time needed to master Fitaly.

The Pocket PC Word Completion feature is designed to work with other input methods such as the pop-up keyboard, to further speed up your input by suggesting words as you type; a quick tap is all that's needed to enter the whole word rather than typing it out in full. However, it uses an American dictionary, which can't be changed to suit users on this side of the Atlantic, and it won't let you add your own words.

TextPlus (\$20, around £11, from [www.smartcell.com](http://www.smartcell.com)) works in virtually the same way, but comes with a UK dictionary and lets you add as many of your own words and phrases as you like. Used in conjunction with Fitaly, this will likely boost your speed beyond anything you'll ever achieve on a desktop computer. ☐

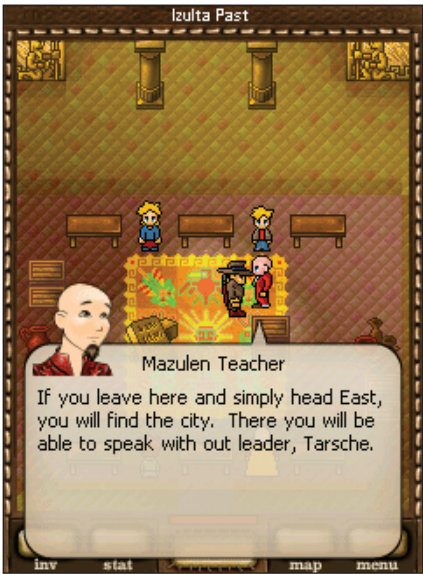
PDA MILL  
Arvale II:  
Ocean of Time  
★★★★★  
\$20 (around £11)

There's no shortage of role-playing games for Pocket PC, but few offer the variety of play you'll find with Arvale II. It is created on a grand scale with more than 300 maps to explore, hundreds of different monsters to fight and a similar number of weapons and magic spells to choose from, so you won't find yourself fighting the same old battles time and again. Based loosely on the original Arvale release of last year, Arvale II offers even better sound and visuals and has more than 40 hours of gameplay as opposed to 20 for the original. Inane storylines are the trademark of this genre, but Arvale II brings an element of wry wit to the story, with some genuinely amusing dialog and a fun theme that's more like *Indiana Jones* than true fantasy role-playing. If you like your adventuring sombre and solemn, you'll probably hate Arvale II, but it's refreshing to see an RPG that doesn't take itself too seriously, and the humour adds a good deal to the game, even if it's a little corny at times. Exploring new worlds is always fun, but battles in RPG games are often reduced to a mechanical, uninteresting exchange of blows where you feel you're having precious little effect on the result. Arvale handles this aspect of



▲ Combat in Arvale II consists of devastating wit that is sure to bring your enemies to their knees

gameplay particularly well too, jumping into an animated side-on view for each combat, where you can exchange weapons to best suit each particular opponent and use your magic spells and potions. Your hero, DeMenchev, has to solve puzzles and avoid traps as well as battle monsters and rescue fair



▲ The interface in Arvale II is simple and friendly enough for children and adults to navigate

maidens, and this all helps to sustain your interest in the game. The interface is simple to get to grips with, but there's a chatty onscreen tutorial (run by a squeaking cartoon chimp) to further simplify the process. The game is great for adults, but then youngsters will love it too, particularly the colourful graphics. It's ideal for keeping kids quiet on long car journeys, and keeping you amused during tedious meetings.

SUMMARY

☒

 Beautifully crafted

☒

 Varied gameplay

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 Humour not for everyone

DETAILS [www.pdamill.com](http://www.pdamill.com)